



MEETING OF THE MINDS

You have been a praying and supporting partner for many years while I have worked in Liberia, Cameroon, and lately in Sierra Leone through Lutheran Bible Translators. Thank you for your faithfulness so others can have the Word of God. Liberia was one of the first countries where LBT started work. For many years we were the largest translation agency there. As mission strategies shifted, we started working more closely with local entities such as the Bible Society of Liberia. It is easy to get tunnel vision and think we are the only ones doing this work. But over the years, **other mission agencies were and still are at work to put the languages of Liberia into the heart languages of the local people.** New agencies have plans and goals for work in Liberia.

This June as I am writing this letter, **multiple agencies are meeting together** at the invitation of the Bible Society. Many agencies do not know about each other. Some of the goals of the meetings are to get to know who is in the country working in Bible translation, what resources each group has, how we can work better together rather than separately and avoid duplicating efforts. **Please pray** following these meetings:

- that discussion will bring good strategies for communication in the future
- for ways we can assist one another with shared resources
- for unity in plans going forward
- for open minds and humble hearts to however the Holy Spirit may be leading all of us in cooperation and collaboration in order to put God's word in people's hands in a useable, meaningful and life-changing way

One of the agencies doing Bible translation is SIM USA working up in Lofa county, Liberia with the Manya people. John Mark Sheppard, his wife Sara and their three children live and work in Voinjama. John Mark grew up in Liberia with his missionary parents. John Mark is a gifted linguist and has been working to translate the Bible into Manya. The NT is completed, and he and his team have



The Sheppard family

begun the OT. Don Slager, the other consultant working with the Bible Society of Liberia, has been working with the Manya team. LBT worked with the Manya many years ago, but much of that material was lost in the civil war. The Manya are part of a larger people group who are mainly Muslim.

Since I work mainly on the front end of the translation process, I do not often have first-hand stories about the impact on the back end of the translation process, that is, the changed lives as a result of hearing God's word in the translated heart language of the people. The latest prayer letter from the Sheppards has some great stories which I want to share with you as an introduction to at least one of the above-mentioned agencies.

"As the reading fluency of our literacy teachers has progressed, we have also been able to involve them in the community checking process. They are currently reviewing our work on Judges and 1 Samuel, checking for clarity and naturalness in the language. One of the teachers remarked at our last meeting how

much he enjoyed reading the stories of the prophets and events that happened long ago in Biblical times. After a lifetime of struggle trying to understand written material in Arabic and French, he loves being able to easily comprehend what he reads in Manya. He told the other teachers, ‘A great darkness has been lifted from over us.’”

“Many of the women in our classes have not had any previous opportunities for formal education, and it is so delightful to hear these dedicated ladies reading from our health lessons and Bible story books.”

*“While we still wait for the New Testament audio to be released, we were thrilled to learn of a young man who has been reading the Manya New Testament online in his search for the truth. After several days of meeting with our lead translator, who answered his questions about the Christian faith, **he gave his life to Jesus and was baptized.**”*

I also recently heard of Rev. John Bundor, a Kisi pastor, who trained many Kisi pastors to read and write Kisi. Some only know Kisi and use it exclusively in their preaching and teaching. Pray for God to raise up more such teachers and pastors who will use the language that will be most effective to open hearts to hear the Good News.

TRANSLATION TIDBITS

Bandi people as well as Maan and Dan, have inclusive “we/our” and exclusive “we/our.” So I can talk to you and include you in my “we” or exclude you meaning me and someone else. In Josh 24:24, the English reads: “**We** will serve the LORD **our** God. **We** will obey his commands.” At first, the translators used the exclusive “our” when talking to Joshua. But God is also Joshua’s God, so they changed it to the inclusive “our”. The other two “we” renderings stayed exclusive because they were making a claim about themselves.

This is the purpose of Bible translation, changed lives as people believe in Jesus as their Savior. **Pray with me** to that end for all the teams and the people groups their work will impact.

Bandi and Krahn: Their reprinted NTs are sitting in the warehouse. **Pray**

- God will raise up motivated people to take those copies out and teach people to use them
- that lives will be changed

Maan and Dan: They use their NTs regularly. **Pray**

- people will continue to use them and desire the entire Bible when it is available
- the teams will find the time to work online so the remaining books can be checked
- as they prepare the manuscript for publication, finding and editing any errors
- for good health, stamina and an eye for detail

Language shift is evident in Liberia. English is the prestige language. Some people are not teaching their children the local language, but neither are they learning standard English well. There may be a need for a Liberian English translation. John Mark has been dabbling in that as well. **Pray**

- for wisdom for translation agencies and local leaders to know how best to reach people with the Good News

Let us (inclusive) not grow weary and continue to serve our God until all have heard.

Becky

ADDITIONAL PRAYER REQUESTS

- Praise for the 60 years LBT has been in mission.
- Pray for wisdom for LBT’s leadership as they set the course for continued work here and abroad.
- Praise that Bandi Leviticus and Daniel are completed.

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